

Defining "Home"

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Defining "Home"

by [SappitusNappitus](#)

Summary

"Wilbur?" A soft voice called into the dark room, just loud enough to pull him from his light sleep. "Are you awake?"

It was Toby, the boy had trouble sleeping every now and then, and Wilbur didn't blame him

for having trouble sleeping tonight considering the circumstances.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm up." Wilbur responded, rubbing the sleep and grogginess from his eyes. A quick glance to the alarm clock on the side table showed that it was only 2:24 in the morning. Toby quietly shuffled into room. The moon light streaming in from the window barely lit up his small frame and his trademark blue blanket that had been worn to bits wrapped around his shoulders. He looked so young.

"It's-it's been so long." Toby's voice cracked, Wilbur could've sworn he heard a snuffle too. It wasn't rare for Toby to cry, he was the most sensitive out of the trio, but that didn't stop the pang that hit Wilbur's heart.

"Hey, you're alright, come here." Wilbur took the younger boy into his arms, "been so long since what?"

"Since we've had a home."

NOT A CHAPTER - Get to know the story line!

Here's my story line!

Wilbur, Tommy, and Toby!-

- Wilbur, Tommy, and Toby are all brothers!
- Wilbur is 17
- He's tall, around 6'5" and he has dark brown hair
- Tommy and Toby are 14 (they're twins)
- Tommy is taller than Toby, standing about 6'3" while Toby is stuck at 5'5"
- But while Toby sticks out because of his height, Tommy's the only blonde of the family
- *(It's really the only way to tell them apart)*
- Tommy is 6 minutes older than Toby, that's *very* important (or at least he says it is)
- They've been in the foster system for a while now
- Bouncing group home to group home
- Never really staying in one place for too long
- They all had to grow up pretty fast because of it
- Wilbur the most, finally taking on a parental role at the age of 15
- He hates thinking of how short Tommy and Toby's childhoods must've seemed to them
- Toby has a blue blanket that he takes everywhere with him
- It's absolutely worn to shreds but he won't let anyone near it
- He even gets anxious just washing it
- Tommy on the other hand has a red stuffed bear
- It doesn't really have a name, everyone just called it "Tommy's Bear" or "Red Bear"
- The blanket and bear are the only comfort items the younger boys have
- Wilbur decided he is in no place to take those from them or decide when they're too old for them
- Wilbur insists the second he turns 18 he'll adopt them and they can finally live a happy life
- Since they're all utterly terrified of being separated
- It's so bad Tommy and Toby have severe separation anxiety
- Toby is definitely the softy out of the twins, he's always been very sensitive
- Even though Tommy is just as sensitive, he'd rather not let it show
- Wilbur isn't as attached to the younger two as they are to him

- But he'd give his life protecting those boys
 - Tommy likes to think he's tougher than Wilbur, Physically, Mentally, and Emotionally.
 - He doesn't really know how to prove it, so he picks fights a lot
 - Someone's picking on Toby? that's a fight. Someone talking bad about Wilbur? That's a fight. Someone talking bad about him? that's a fight. Someone looks at him the wrong way? That's a fight.
 - They rarely get physical because Will is always disappointed when they get that far
 - Tommy's really just trying to get attention, as much as he hates to say it
 - Toby has severe dyslexia so a lot of time is spent tutoring him or working on reading
 - Nothing's ever really been wrong with Tommy
 - At least not that he knows of...
 - Wilbur's oblivious obviously, but that'll be addressed later :)
-

Clay and George!-

- Clay and George have been best friends since before high school
 - Everyone weekend was spent at either's house
 - They were basically attached at the hip
 - They even got voted "Cutest Couple That Never Was" in the year book
 - Only finally realizing their love for each other at the end senior year
 - They ended up going to the same college together
 - Even buying their own apartment together
 - Everything had been going perfectly, they had graduated, gotten jobs, moved into a house with two extra bedroom
 - Then they realized they wanted kids
 - Which is kind of hard to do when you're both boys...
 - That's why they decided to adopt!
 - Clay wanted to adopt young
 - But George wanted to adopt older
 - The older they get, the less of a chance of fostering or adoption they had
 - And George wanted to make sure everyone got an equal chance for a home, no matter their age
-

Eret!-

- Eret shows up later in this story
- He's 16
- A year older than the twins
- He's lived in this town his whole life
- He's kind of an outcast
- it's not that he's done anything wrong
- Kids are just mean sometimes,
- He has two moms, sometimes he wears dresses, he likes both boys and girls
- And some kids don't like that
- But he ends up becoming very close friends with Toby!

When the world flips upside down

Chapter Summary

Tommy and Toby spend a day at the park, then Wilbur turns their whole world upside down.

It wasn't often that Tommy and Toby got to be kids. Constantly worrying if they'd be thrown out of this group home, constantly thinking they'd be split up at any second, constantly wondering what would change tomorrow. That's all their brains were ever filled with; Worrying, thinking, wondering. It was tiring.

Toby sat on a small wooden bench outside of the main school doors. Toby was dyslexic, which normally isn't too big of a problem, but Toby's case was a little different. His dyslexia had been at a point where it could take him around 5-10 minutes to sound out a sentence. He wasn't illiterate, but the letters were all jumbled and flipped and if he even slightly glanced away from whatever word he's looking at, everything just flipped again and he had to start over. It got to the point where he was taken out of normal classes and put in '*special*' classes. He hated these classes. Before, he'd be able to be with Tommy, his brother, but now he only saw Tommy during lunch.

He had a teacher aid, her name was Mrs. Brush. He'd get all of his work for the week on a Monday, then he'd sit with Mrs. Brush and they'd decide their goals for the week. They'd spend half the day working on school work and the other half working on reading. If they didn't meet their goal, he'd work over the weekend. Normally Wilbur, the oldest brother, could help him if he needed it. But, since he was in these special classes, he got out of class 15 minutes early. So every day he'd sit on his bench and watch the waves of people flow by, he'd see people laughing, playfully shoving their friends, he'd see girls gossiping about which boys they like or who they think has a crush on the other, he'd see kids racing to get to their bus, and then he'd see a mop of curly brown hair tower over everyone, and that of course was-

"Wilbur!" Toby yelled, jumping up for his seat. He ran to the older boy, throwing his arms around him. Wilbur carefully maneuvered the textbooks he was holding to hug the boy back without hitting him, out of context, you might be wondering why a 14 year old was acting like he hadn't seen his brother in years, but that wasn't really the case. Wilbur knows Toby is sensitive, he was diagnosed with separation anxiety at the age of 6, only a month after their parents left, so Wilbur always tried to give him the extra attention that he'd surely love and let him know they weren't going anywhere.

"Hi, Toby, how was your day?" Wilbur asked, still holding the younger brunette.

Toby pulled away and held up a paper, "I got a B- on my reading test! That's 2 letter grades higher than last time!"

"I'm so proud of you, you're getting so much better." Wilbur said, ruffling Toby's hair.

"Guys, guys!" A voice boomed, they both turned to see A blonde haired boy bounding towards them, backpack falling off his shoulder and swinging around his arm, weaving in and out of the waves of people,

"Tommy! Watch where you're going!" Wilbur chastised.

"But look! I got a girls number!" He shoved the piece of ripped paper into Wilbur's face, nearly knocking off his glasses in the process.

"How much did you pay her to get this?" Wilbur teased, Tommy snatched back the paper, huffing and the trio started on their way home.

It wasn't really a "home" per say, it was a home of sorts, as in yes, that is where they sleep, that is where they eat, that is where they go after school. It's just them and four other kids, plus Miss Jenna, who runs the group home.

The group home was a large square building that was made almost entirely out of brick, on one side of the building was an old folks home, and Toby found those were some of the meanest people he'd ever met, and on the other side was a park. The park was fairly large. Half of it was a playground with slides and monkey bars and random things to climb on while the other side was an open field with a few trees scattered here and there to provide a little bit of shade.

"Wilbur, do you think we could go to the park today? Just the three of us, like we used to?" Toby asked,

Wilbur thought for a second, "I don't see why not, you'll have to ask Miss Jenna, but as long as we're back for dinner I don't think there would be any problem with it." Toby and Tommy immediately took off in a race towards the building at Wilbur's response, which was okay since the building was only one lot down.

"Miss Jenna, can Tommy, Wilbur, and I go to the park next door? I promise we'll be safe and Wilbur will be there to keep a close eye on us and we'll be back before dinner!" Toby begged.

"Well, only if you're back before dinner." Toby thanked her and ran to tell Wilbur and Tommy, who were in Tommy and Toby's shared bedroom, the news. "If you miss dinner, you're out of luck!"

Wilbur ended up just watching the boys run around. They first started off by playing tag, every once in a while you'd hear one of them yell, *"You're it!"*, *"Hey, that's not fair!"*, *"You're cheating!"*, *"You can't tag me, I called a time out!"* and the newest one Wilbur had heard was, *"Wait, I thought I was it."* Eventually the boys switched the hide and seek, which is kind of hard when there's only a few trees, but they still made it work, they even pulled Wilbur in for a few games.

Wilbur decided that it was time to call the boys back when he saw there was a decent amount of grass stains on their jeans and the sun was just barely starting to set, so they made their way back to the building laughing to whole way, telling Wilbur stories about what they did as if he wasn't watching the whole time.

As they made their way into the dinning hall, Miss Jenna pulled Wilbur aside.

"Wilbur, can I borrow you for a second?" she asked, her ginger bob bouncing around her shoulders.

"Uh, sure." Her and Wilbur stepped into a side room, there were two men sitting on one side of the foldable table, smiling lovingly at each other. One of them has short brown hair and brown eyes, while the second one has medium length blonde hair, green eyes, and is covered in freckles.

“This is Clay and George, they’re looking to foster someone a little older.”

Wilbur’s heart dropped.

“We know the statistics of older kids and their chance of getting fostered and we want to make sure every kid has a good chance for a loving home, we just thought-” The brown haired man’s words were drowned out by the sounds of all of Wilbur’s rampant thoughts.

“If you’re fostering me, you’re fostering my brothers too.” Wilbur said firmly, only cringing a little when he realized he’d cut the brunette off, “Sorry, it’s just we’re all that we have left and I refuse to leave them. If you only have room for one, then I’m sorry but you’ll have to find someone else.”

“That’s completely understandable, why don’t you tell us a little bit about yourself and them?” The blonde asked.

And so Wilbur started talking. He talked about where they were from and how they grew up there for a few years then their parents lost custody and with no other family members or relatives they got stuck in the system. He talked about how they’ve bounced from group home to group home, the lack of stability and consistency the three boys have had, he talked about Toby’s diagnoses from Dyslexia to Separation Anxiety, and his own struggles with Depression and PTSD, he talked about Tommy’s abandonment issues and how he’s a true, textbook definition, class clown, and how the boy might have a future in comedy. He talked about the times the three have had in the park, and Tommy’s peanut allergy and Toby’s fear of heights, he talked about how they’d tease Toby for getting the short gene, since all the other Ward kids were over 6 foot but Toby was stuck at 5’5”. He just talked, and they listened and smiled and laughed and gave sympathy right when it was needed.

They were different. They were *perfect*.

He couldn't wait to tell Tommy and Toby.

George and Clay agreed to come back tomorrow to meet the other boys and then they’d go from there. In the meantime, Wilbur rushed to the dinning hall, where Tommy and Toby were, to tell them the news.

“Guys! Listen! I just talked to the nicest people about fostering, they were perfect I swear-” Both Tommy and Toby looked like they had seen a ghost.

“You’re leaving us?” Toby squeaked.

“Wait, what? That’s not-” Wilbur was interrupted by Toby dropping his silverware and running to his room. Tommy’s face grew dark,

“You would do something like this. Wouldn’t you?” Tommy spat, words laced with venom.

“You guys aren’t listening-”

“I’m going to go fix what you started.” Tommy said, pushing past Wilbur to go comfort Toby.

Wilbur waited a few seconds and then followed, only to find the doorknob locked. He lightly knocked on the door.

“Do you really think we want to see you right now?!” Tommy yelled through the door.

“I’ll talk to you both in the morning, goodnight. I love you.” Wilbur sighed when he didn’t get a response, walking across the hall and going into his own bedroom. He sat on the edge of his bed, running his hand over his face before flopping backwards and staring at the ceiling. Wilbur didn’t sleep much that night.

Tommy's Falling Again

Chapter Summary

With the weight and stress of everything that's going on and the thought that Wilbur might be getting separated from the twins, Tommy acts out in class and gets sent to the principal only to have a panic attack on the way there. Wilbur just happens to be in the hall when he sees Tommy curled up hyperventilating on the wall, will Wilbur help or hurt?

Wilbur quietly knocked on the door to wake the boys up, only to be greeted with Tommy pushing past him roughly and Toby trudging slowly behind, neither boy met his eyes.

They ignore all of Wilbur's attempts to start a conversation, or apologize, or even explain himself, but they still packed their things and started on their walk to school.

The walk to school was far quieter than normal, the air between the three brothers was thick with tension. Tommy didn't crack any jokes or tease Wilbur for how quickly he was catching up to the taller boy's height and Toby didn't point out all the birds he saw or show how well he could read the road signs he passed. And Wilbur didn't have anything to listen to, he didn't have anything to respond to, or correct, or anything. The silence was deafening.

The twins walked slightly ahead of Wilbur, that wasn't out of the normal. They'd walk slightly in front of him so he could have a better eye on them, but this time they walked with their shoulders flush together, hand and hand. It was a comfort tactic the two had come up with a while ago. If one was feeling bad, they'd stand as close to each other as humanly possible and hold hands. Wilbur thought it was the cutest thing in the world, but knowing he was the cause of the foul emotions that headed the cute position the boys were in was one of the worst feelings he had ever felt. His stomach was heavy with guilt.

"You guys know I would never leave you." Wilbur spoke softly,

"Do we?" Tommy spat back, venom lacing his words, yet he didn't dare turn to face the taller boy.

That was the only bit of conversation the three had on their walk to school.

As they walked into the school building Tommy pulled Toby aside, but Wilbur kept walking, only turning around after a moment to see if the boys were still there. He was met with the two boys standing in each other's embrace. Tommy stood with his back to Wilbur but Toby was facing Wilbur with his head leaning on Tommy's shoulder. His eyes slowly met Wilbur's and they stood there for a second before squeezing his eyes shut, Wilbur could almost feel the hurt radiating out of Toby.

As the two pulled apart, Tommy whispered something that Wilbur couldn't quite hear, Toby nodded then turned to go to his classroom which was in the opposite direction of Tommy's. Tommy turned towards Wilbur, shaking his head, and roughly pushed past him. Wilbur knew today was going to be a rough day for Tommy. Everyone knew Toby was the most sensitive, but Wilbur sometimes had to disagree. Sure, Toby cried more or was more vocal about his feelings, but

being their brother, he knew Tommy felt so many emotions and he took every emotion he felt to heart, even if he did bottle it all up. But the problem with bottling it all up was that eventually, it would bust. Wilbur had a feeling that day was going to be today.

Tommy's day had gone by pretty much the same as always, nothing too out of the ordinary, unless you counted your oldest brother who was one of the only things you had constant in your life tells you he might be going to a foster home, leaving you and your twin brother behind as out of the ordinary. Tommy didn't want to, he hated to admit it, but he was beyond stressed. He was worried about where Wilbur would go, if they would get to go with him, he was worried about how Toby would react to anything and everything that might happen. But for right now, he was in Biology class and they were learning about Genetics. They even had a project that they were presenting, a family tree.

"-ommy, Tommy, are you even listening?" The teacher's voice pulled him out of his thoughts.

"Sorry sir, just caught up in thought." Tommy answered.

"Well, it's your turn to present your family tree. Up to the board you go."

Everyone else's projects had been big, on full poster boards, going back two or three generations. But Tommy's was just on one piece of loose leaf paper, and right in row were only three names.

"This is, uh- this is my family tree." It was the truth, but honestly it was more of a family stick. He heard a couple kids snicker from the back of the class. Suddenly, his cool-kid facade was dropped, he wasn't exactly sure why, but he felt so incredibly small standing in front of everyone.

"It's not that big, it's just me and my brothers Wilbur and Toby."

"Why didn't you write your last name?" someone in the second row asked,

"Well, my last name is Ward right now, because I'm a ward of the state. It's legal but it's not my *real* last name, it's just a placeholder for now." Tommy answered quietly.

"Why don't you have parents?" Someone asked from the back, it was one of the kids that had laughed at him.

"I don't really know." Tommy whispered, he could feel his eyes start to burn as he was trying to hold back tears.

"Aww, is wittle Tommy gonna cry?" The kids teased, earning laughs from around the classroom.

"Why don't you shut the fuck up, Cameron. I may not have parents but at least I know my family loves me." Tommy spat back.

"Thomas! Just because you are upset does not mean you can use words like that!" The teacher scolded, "If you don't calm down right now, I'll send you to the principal's office."

Something snapped inside of Tommy, he crumpled up his paper and threw it in the general direction of the teacher then immediately left the classroom, slamming the door behind him. He only made it a few feet away from the door when he realized just how badly his hands were shaking and his chest felt tight and his knees felt like jelly and his head was floating. Tears started to flow freely as he walked around the corner towards the principal's office, out of nowhere, his knees buckled and he collapsed against the wall, letting sobs wrack through his body. He brought

up his knees to hide his face and wrapped his arms around his torso, trying to give himself any kind of comfort whatsoever. That was when he felt a pair of strong arms wrap around his shoulders and pull him so his back was against their chest, holding him firmly. The position was more than comforting but his first instinct was still to try and get away, obviously, so he pushed and thrashed and kicked hoping that whoever was holding him would let go and let him panic in peace. But the arms never let go.

"It's okay, Tommy. You're okay. It's just me, it's just me." A voice echoed throughout his head. It was soft like velvet against all the panic and the bad thoughts, and every emotion he had felt up to that point was suddenly gone as he held onto the soothing voice,

It was Wilbur.

It was by complete chance that Wilbur happened to be in the hallways, he had finished his work early so he was reading a book, when the teacher asked him to run a few textbooks down to another teacher's classroom since they had been left there by a few students. Of course he said yes, he was somewhat of a golden child, all the teachers loved him.

Wilbur made his way out of the class with both textbooks, heading in the direction of the other teacher's room. On the way there he saw a lump on the ground, maybe a student who had passed out or something. He stopped a good distance away, surveying the situation and his options, trying to figure out who that was on the ground. He could hear a few quiet sobs coming from the person,

Then something clicked. A slight change in Wilbur's position let him catch a glimpse of the person's mess of blonde hair. A mess of blonde hair that he sees every morning.

It was Tommy.

Wilbur dropped the books he was holding and rushed over to Tommy's side, wrapping his arms around Tommy's shoulders and pulling him into a hug from behind. Tommy tried to thrash it away out but there was no way in hell Wilbur would give up that easily,

"Tommy calm down. It's just me, It's Wilbur." Wilbur pleaded, but Tommy still tried to get away.

"It's okay, Tommy. You're okay. It's just me, it's just me." Tommy's thrashing slowed,

"Wilbur?" His voice sounded so small and broken.

"Yeah, yeah, it's me, I've got you."

Tommy twisted in Wilbur's arms and curled up in Wilbur's chest, arms wrapping around Wilbur's torso, definitely getting tear stains on Wilbur's grey crewneck.

"What happened, why're you so upset?" Wilbur asked, softly. Tommy's response was just a shake of the head,

"Alright, that's okay, but if you ever want to talk about it I'm right here, okay?" Wilbur asked, Tommy only buried himself further into Wilbur's embrace.

"Please don't leave me." Tommy begged, voice shaking.

Me. Not *us*, not "*please don't leave* ." He said "please don't leave *me* ." It was only one word but it struck Wilbur in the heart. Sometimes he forgot that Tommy was human too, he may laugh a lot and act out to cover up his actions but he was still a human with real feelings that he just happened

to have a bad habit of bottling up.

“I will never leave you. I will never leave Toby. If I am getting a home then so are you. You can't get rid of me that easily. We can get through this, together.” Wilbur responded, placing a soft kiss on the top of Tommy's hair, then helping the younger boy stand up.

“Let's walk you back to your class, alright?” Wilbur suggested. Tommy nodded and wiped his eyes on his sleeve, sniffing.

As they started walking towards Tommy's class, Wilbur noticed Tommy pressing into his side, as close as humanly possible, and start to reach for Wilbur's hand. *The comfort tactic* .

Wilbur and Tommy walked hand and hand to Tommy's class. Wilbur opened the class door and sent the younger boy in.

“Well there you are Thomas, It's about time you-” The teacher stopped once he got a good look at Tommy's face, his cheeks were blotchy and still had tear stains on them and his eyes were red and puffy from the crying. “Are you alright, Tommy?” The teacher asked, eyes flickering between Tommy and Wilbur, who was still standing at the door.

“Not right now, but I will be.” Tommy said with a sad smile, and he sat down in his seat, ready to finish the day to spend more time with Wilbur.

something small is still something in the end

Chapter Summary

Tommy learns that maybe it's alright to not be alright

TWs

Mentions of panic attacks, past child sexual abuse if you squint, talk about fostering, VERY mild self-harm

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Toby was waiting at the bench after school when he saw Wilbur walking towards him from the wrong direction. He was walking as if he was coming from home, but he should've been at school, right? Had Wilbur gone home early? Where was Tommy? Did he get sick? Were they alright? Suddenly all of the tension he was holding from the fight the three boys had vanished.

"Will? Why are you- What were you- Did-" Toby started but Wilbur stopped him,

"Everything's fine Toby, don't worry." Wilbur said slinging an arm around Toby's shoulders, pulling him into a hug. It was like Wilbur was accepting an apology that Toby didn't give.

"Where's Tommy?" Toby asked.

"Um- he... he had a rough day so I signed us out early. We've been home, I didn't want to take you out of your classes if I didn't absolutely need to but I didn't want you to be worried or have to walk home by yourself." Wilbur replied, as the pair started making their way towards their home.

"Is he alright? What happened?"

"I don't know how much he wants me to say, if anything, but it was just a really rough day for him."

"If anyone deserves to know what happened, It's me. He's my twin brother and I care a lot about him. So I deserve to know what happened." Toby said, firmly, while crossing his arms.

"Okay okay, but don't go around telling anyone about it. He had a panic attack, a bad one at that, too. I found him collapsed in the hallway."

Toby's arms fell from their stiff position, "Is-is he okay now?" He asked worriedly .

"He'll be alright, we went home and talked, he's taking a nap now and he'll probably be out for the night." Wilbur added, "but he'll be alright."

Toby nodded and they were on their way home, the only things Toby could think about were Tommy, and how long things like this had probably been going on.

Tommy woke to sunlight streaming through the curtains of his and Toby's shared room. This

wasn't odd considering they normally woke up after the sunrise but the amount of sunlight coming through was definitely more than normal. He thought about the conversation he had with Wilbur last night... Well, yesterday afternoon. They talked about what caused Tommy to freak out the way he did, Tommy told him how scared and hopeless he felt, he talked about how his hands wouldn't stop shaking and his legs felt like jello. Wilbur comforted him the best he could, he even held the younger boy, which wouldn't have been an odd action from Wilbur but it was unusual for Tommy to let people get touchy with him. Wilbur made Tommy promise to tell him if something like that was happening or if he thought it was going to happen or anything like that. Tommy promised, but the promise was empty. He did it more or less to just give Wilbur the ease of mind. Wilbur had thanked him and asked if he needed anything, to which Tommy only asked for Wilbur to stay with him, he liked the grounding presence Wilbur had to him, so the two boys just enjoyed each others' presence until Tommy had fallen asleep. He sighed and gimmanced at the memory but rolled over groggily and glanced at the red digital numbers of his alarm clock on his side table.

10:44 am

Shit. He's late for school. He shot into a sitting position, throwing his legs over the side of the bed and letting his socked feet hit the ground with a start. He looked over to Toby's bed, but he wasn't there. A quick glance around the small room showed him that Toby was actually nowhere to be seen, although the door was left slightly ajar. Did Wilbur and Toby forget him? No, no they would never. Besides, Toby doesn't normally wake up on his own, so unless Wilbur came in... but that couldn't have happened either because Tommy's such a light sleeper and that would've surely woken him up, especially if he had fallen asleep around 3 pm, but even with the 19 hours of sleep, Tommy still felt exhausted.

He peaked out of the door that was left slightly open, quietly shuffling into the hallway and pushing open Wilbur's door, which was also not closed all the way.

"Good morning sleepyhead, it's about time you got up!" A deep voice sounded, Tommy smiled in reply, relaxing and stretching his arms. It was Wilbur.

Wilbur was sitting on the foot of his bed, reading a book aloud and Toby was laying across the floor listening.

"Is school cancelled or something?" Tommy asked, the sleep still very evident in his voice, making it slightly gravely.

"Not really, we're skipping today because you're gonna be talking to those people that want to foster us. You guys are gonna meet them today." Wilbur said, closing the book.

Something grew cold in Tommy's stomach, it wasn't that he didn't want to have the chance for a home, or that he wasn't thankful, but it had been quite a long time since he's had to do one of these *'interviews'*.

"I thought I'd stay back with you guys just in case you'd rather me be there. The meeting is supposed to be one on one but I can stay with you if you'd like." Wilbur offered, and honestly, Tommy would like that. He was nervous and he hadn't even met them or knew their names. But Tommy wasn't weak, he didn't need Wilbur to hold his hand and make him feel safe. He could do that himself, he could get over a few nerves. Plus, Toby needed Wilbur far more than he did, and he didn't want to take the focus of Toby.

"I think I'll be alright on my own," Wilbur raised an eyebrow at Tommy's response,

"You know there's nothing wrong with--"

"Anyways, why didn't you wake me up this morning?" Tommy interrupted Wilbur and quickly changed the subject, sitting cross legged in Wilbur's desk chair.

"I thought you'd need the sleep after yesterday." It was a simple response, but it sure as hell made the room grow tense. He gave a quick glance in Toby's direction, just to see a pitying look.

Tommy *hated* pity.

Wilbur had obviously told him something happened, even if he told him the bare minimum (*which is what Tommy was hoping*), it was still enough for him to know something was wrong or something had been wrong at one point, and as far as Tommy was concerned, there was nothing *wrong* with him. Well, he had a peanut allergy, but that was it... and sometimes he gets so nervous and can't eat, and other times he gets so overwhelmed that he can't stop shaking, and if he sits still for too long his skin and muscles feel like they're burning. But it's nothing. It's nothing compared to what Toby and Wilbur go through and if it *was* something then Tommy would've been diagnosed with it. But he wasn't.

Toby and dyslexia and anxiety, Wilbur had Depression and PTSD, and Tommy... well he was just Tommy. He needed to help his brothers, he hated the thought of making them take on both their own problems as well as his problems, so he'd rather just keep them to himself. They couldn't focus on him, anyways. It wasn't like he couldn't deal with anything that came up on his own. Yesterday was just a special case, there was just a lot happening all at once. It was overwhelming and it would've been overwhelming for anyone, but it wouldn't happen again, that's for sure.

The boys made their way to the dining hall to eat an early lunch, or late breakfast. Whatever you want to call it.

"So when are we meeting them?" Toby asked,

"Whenever they get here. It could be a few minutes, it could be a few hours. Just depends." Wilbur said with a mouth full of lucky charms. Toby shifted uneasily in his seat. Wilbur lowered his spoon, eyes carefully watching Toby.

"I don't like that I don't know, it puts me on edge." Toby said in response to the older brother's worried gaze. Wilbur had always asked Toby to be extremely open with his emotions, it was mainly just because the younger boy's anxiety could get pretty bad if not kept in control but if he let someone know how he was feeling then it could be fixed before it ever even gets bad.

"How about I go with you when they get here? So you don't feel as much pressure." Wilbur suggested. Toby relaxed a little,

"That'd be nice, even if it's just for the first bit."

And with that they ate in silence. It was a comfortable silence, though. No tension in the air, no hating your brother for a misunderstanding, no awkward conversations, no-

"There you boys are!" Miss Jenna appeared in the doorway, her ginger bob bouncing around her shoulders slightly as she shook her head, "I've been looking everywhere for you! You have some visitors who'd like to meet you! Anyone want to go first?" She asked, Toby and Wilbur ended up going first, while Tommy went back to his room and sat on the edge of his bed. He let out a long breath through his nose. He could do this, they would like him, wouldn't they? There was nothing they *couldn't* like because there was nothing wrong with him.

He shuffled through a random deck of Pokemon cards to kill some time, they were Toby's cards but

he wouldn't care. Tommy just needed a distraction. His muscles were itching to move. He ended up pacing the room, thinking about anything and everything that could go wrong. He chewed on the skin next to his fingernail until it was raw, it was somewhat soothing but probably a bad coping mechanism for anxiety. He smeared the small bit of blood that had beaded next to his fingernail, there was something mesmerising about it. There was a stark contrast between the red and the pasty white of his skin. Maybe this was something he should bring up to Wilbur?

Tommy jumped as he heard the door open, too lost in thought to be present. He quickly wiped the blood from his thumb onto his jeans, as Wilbur and Toby walked in. Tommy half expected Toby to walk in crying and shaking the way he normally does when he gets stressed out or overwhelmed but the pair walked in laughing and smiling at each other.

That's good. Tommy thought. If Toby liked them, then he would probably like them as well. He just hoped they liked him back.

"How'd it go?" Tommy asked nervously, subconsciously wringing his hands.

"It went really well actually! I got to meet George and Clay, they're both really nice and Clay is really funny! You'll finally have another blonde to be around," Toby joked, "But in all honestly I think you'll really like them both."

"That's good that you liked them... guess it's my turn now?" Tommy asked,

"Yeah, if you're ready we can head over."

Wilbur and Tommy left the room, leaving Toby by himself, but he'd be fine. As they approached the room Tommy noticed Wilbur wasn't stopping,

"Wait, are you going in too?" He asked.

"I was planning on it, but if you don't want me to I can go back with Toby." Wilbur responded, "It's up to you."

Tommy thought for a second, then suddenly he felt slightly offended. Did Wilbur really think he was that incapable of going by himself? Seriously, he only had one panic attack and now Wilbur was going to be up his ass like a fly to manure.

"You know, I don't need you for everything. Yesterday was a one time thing." Tommy said, with a little bit of roughness edging his words.

Wilbur looked taken aback, "I just wanted to make sure-" he started.

"I'm going in by myself. If I need you, *which I won't*, I'll know where to find you." Tommy huffed, and entered the interview room.

On one side of an old oak table sat two men talking to each other, one was a brunette and the other was blonde. The blonde was definitely taller than the brunette because he towered over him, even just sitting in the chairs.

"Um," Tommy said, getting their attention.

"Oh! Sorry, you must be Tommy!" The brunette smiled, "I'm George and this is Clay."

"H-hello." Tommy responded shyly, standing awkwardly in the doorway.

“Take a seat, don’t worry.” The blonde man, now known as Clay says.

“So,” George starts, “Tell us about yourself, what’s your favorite color?”

Simple questions like these went on for about 15 minutes, Tommy replied with half-assed responses, but Clay decided to get deep out of nowhere.

“Who’s your hero?” He asked, Tommy faltered for a moment, thinking.

“Wilbur.” He responded with a nod.

“Why is that?” George asked, “Not that we’re saying you’re wrong, I just want to know why.” He smiled reassuringly.

“Um, I guess just thinking about how much he does for us and the stuff he went through when we were younger and even the stuff he goes through now, it’s all so much and seeing where he is and what he’s overcome is really inspiring. He’s my role model, I want to be exactly like him.” Tommy said.

“Since we’re on the topic of what people are going through,” Clay said, shifting back in his seat slightly, “we wanted to know if there was anything you’re going through, it could be a mental health issue, a physical health issue, it doesn’t matter. We want our home to be a safe place for anyone in it and knowing these kinds of things and how we can help will definitely make that easier for everyone.”

“Well, Wilbur and Toby-”

“We’ve already talked to Wilbur and Toby, we want to know about you.” George interrupted.

Tommy thought for a second, “I have a peanut allergy. If I eat any nuts my throat will close up.”

George let out a small laugh, “Well, thank you for letting us know, is there anything else?”

“No. No, that’s all.” Tommy answered a little too quickly.

Clay eyed him for a second, “Are you sure? You know, we won’t judge you for anything. You could be a paranoid schizophrenic for all we care. As long as you have a good character or are actively working on bettering your character, we will always have a place for you.”

“It’s-it’s nothing. It’s really small and it’s nothing I can’t deal with.”

“If it’s anything, then it’s something, and it’s better for us to know about something rather than nothing.”

Tommy nodded and thought about his response carefully, “I had a really bad panic attack yesterday.” He started, both Clay and George looked at him with sympathy in their eyes, Tommy almost hated it but there was something in their gaze that was comforting, almost edging him along, “I kinda collapsed in the hallway at school, I don’t know how but Wilbur found me and he helped me out of it. I don’t really know what caused it, I think it was just a lot of things building up and finally something triggered it. It could’ve probably been avoided but I didn’t want to bother Wilbur or Toby with my problems, you know? They have their own issues and I have mine, so they don’t need to worry about both of them.”

“Do you help Wilbur and Toby with their problems?” George asked,

“Well, yes but-”

“You shouldn’t have to help them if you don’t feel like you’re going to get anything out of it in a time when you need it and they are capable.” George interrupted.

“It’s not that they won’t help me, it’s just that I don’t want them too. I’ll feel guilty about it.” Tommy finished, George and Clay realized they were getting nowhere in the conversation at least for right now, and decided to move on.

“Are you diagnosed with anxiety?” Clay asked.

“No, I’m not.”

“Have you ever seen someone about that or even thought maybe you might have it?”

“I don’t really think about it too much.”

“Well, we were reading through your files, and we think it would be a good idea to see someone eventually considering what you guys went through-”

“Nothing happened to me. I wasn’t affected.” Tommy said forcefully, Clay pressed his lips together slightly,

“You don’t have to be the direct victim to be impacted. Seeing that kind of thing go on, or even just *know* it’s happening can still cause some trauma.” Clay said, softly.

Tommy’s hands started to feel clammy and his left leg started to bounce involuntarily, “I don’t want to talk about this anymore.”

“That’s alright, I’m sorry if we upset you, but we’ll change the subject. How’s school going? Do you have a favorite subject?” Tommy tried to focus on the question, but his hands were starting to shake and his stomach was doing flips,

“Can-can we just take a break for a second? Like, can-can I get Wilbur?” Tommy asked, voice quivering slightly.

“Of course! Do you want someone to come with you or will you be alright by yourself?”

“I should be fine.” Tommy said while standing, “I’ll be back in a few.”

He made his way through the hallway on shaky legs. He opened the door to Wilbur’s room, surprised to see Toby wasn’t in there. He was probably back in their shared room.

“Tommy? Done so soon?” Wilbur asked, dog-eared the book he was reading

“We’re not done, it’s just that, um.. I just kinda- I just wanted- Um, could you come back with me?” Tommy asked quickly.

“Yeah, yeah I can do that.” Wilbur smiled. The two went back, the atmosphere was far lighter with Wilbur there.

Maybe it’s okay to need someone sometimes. Tommy thought.

The four joked around telling stories or fun facts about themselves until Miss. Jenna came in to tell them their times was up,

“So how’d it go?” She asked,

“It went really well! I really like them and I think Wilbur and Toby also really like them.” Tommy responded,

“Well in that case, we should be able to get all of their paperwork approved by tonight and if everyone’s ready, maybe we could talk about packing and moving in within the next few days?” Tommy stopped in his tracks at Miss. Jenna’s words,

Wow. He thought. Everything was already moving so fast but he didn’t find himself as nervous as he thought he’d be, he felt a smile creeping across his face then he took off down the hall to tell Toby the news.

Chapter End Notes

Hi! thanks for reading this chapter, sorry for the kinda late update, I'm trying to get back on schedule and with school starting its just been a lil ruff, but i have finished my story board and there's like 40 chapters in all! I plan on doing an epilogue for Wilbur, Tommy, and Toby after I finish with this one, but let's just focus on one thing at a time, haha.

If you have any suggestions for something that you want time happen, I may be able to write it in! You'll never know unless you comment! So leave one! :)

A warm welcoming home

Chapter Summary

After Clay and George fill out the piles upon piles of paperwork Wilbur, Tommy, and Toby finally get to see their new home for the foreseeable future, as well as meet a new furry friend!

TWs

Mentions of child molestation, Mentions of child abuse

George was sat at the kitchen table, reading glasses sitting far down on his nose as he shifted and flipped through all the paperwork; checking off a box here or signing a line there, writing in information about how much the household makes per year and the such. He felt an arm slink around his shoulders, giving him a hug from behind. He leaned into the feeling, smiling and sighing lightly.

"How's it going?" Clay asked, looking down at all the papers, he has already gone through and signed what he needed to the night before, so he understood how long and tedious the process was.

"It's going, that's for sure," George paused, "I'm almost through all of it, thankfully."

Clay placed a kiss on top of George's head, to which George turned around in his chair and held Clay's face in both hands, giving him a slightly longer chaste kiss, then turned back around to keep working on the stacks of paperwork.

Clay's eyes wandered to the three Manila folders sitting on the table.

"Are we going to be good enough for them?" Clay asked, gesturing to the folders, "there's a lot that's gone on in their lives and I just want them to be in the best possible situation."

George picked up the folders and started to open them, "We can give them a loving home, and support, and we are in a good enough position to pay for therapy if they need it or want it."

Clay nodded into George's hair, "You're right, we're going to be the best dads they could've asked for. I'll go start lunch for us while you keep working." Clay finished, George hummed in response and pulled out the first stapled packet from each boy's folder, lining them up on the table since the next things for him to check off in the paperwork was that he read through the files and understood what they contained. The first was Tommy's;

Name: Thomas Daniel Ward

Preferred Name/Nickname: Tom/Tommy

Birthdate: 14 February, 2003

Sex: M

Skin Tone: White

Eye Color: Blue

Hair Color: Blonde

Height: 6 Foot 3 Inches

Blood Type: AB+

Medical Concerns/Allergies: Mild Scoliosis, Peanut Allergy, Signs of Pre-T1D (Pre-Type 1 Diabetes)

Notes on Medical Concerns/Allergies: The scoliosis just affects posture and is mild enough that it should not cause any problems. Peanut allergy is severe enough to require hospitalization, EpiPen should be carried in case of emergencies. Signs of Pre-T1D seen is sporadic low and high blood sugar levels, should be monitored closely.

Mental Health Diagnoses: Separation Anxiety

Prescribed Medications: EpiPen

Is this person in Therapy: No

Notes on Prescribed Medications: Use as needed/for emergencies

Under the listed information was a set of tiny fingerprints, slightly smudged, but still there nonetheless.

The next page was a worksheet. It was supposed to be used so that the child could see what they were like in the past if they didn't have an adult to tell them that was there for that time of their life, or just as a keepsake. Scribbled along the lines was the messy handwriting of a young Tommy.

How old are you? I am 8

When is your birthday? 14 Feb 2003

What is your favorite food? Chocolate

What is your least favorite food? Broccoli

What is your favorite animal? Bear

What is your favorite color? Red

What is the title of your favorite book? Where The Wild Things Are

What is your favorite ice cream flavor? Mint Chocolate Chip

If you could have one thing, what would it be? A happy family

Who is your best friend? Toby

When I grow up I want to be- An astronaut

What makes me happy- When I get to be play with Toby

What makes me sad- When I have to talk about what happened

Something I really don't like- Talking about what happened

What is your favorite subject in school? Math

Have you ever been in Foster Care before? No

How does Foster Care make you feel? unsure

What is your full name at the time of writing this? Thomas Daniel Soot

The last paper attached to the stapled packed was an incident report. The reason they were taken out of the care of their biological father.

Incident Report - Copy 3, Thomas D. Soot

Reported by: Officer Phil Z.

Date of Report: Nov. 19, 2011

Incident No. 351a

Incident Type: Child Molestation, Child Abuse

Location: 1439 Denver Rd, London, England

Incident Description: Father had been accused of child molestation and child abuse of two of his three sons (Wilbur and Toby). Third son (Thomas) denied being touched, but did not deny that the molestation of the two other boys. All three children had bruises, all claimed they received said bruises while acting in self defense as well as during acts of physical abuse. Rooms were unkept and dirty, kitchen and bathroom had mold spores. The children did not have proper

clothing and were not currently attending school or registered for the current school year.

Name/Role parties involved-

- 1. Wilbur O. Soot/Brother***
- 2. Thomas D. Soot/Brother***
- 3. Toby D. Soot/Brother***
- 4. Vincent M. Soot/Father***

Name/Role witnesses-

- 1. Mariah N. Davis/Neighbor***
- 2. Steven T. Davis/Neighbor***
- 3. Hannah R. Jones/Previous School Teacher***

On the back of the incident report sheet was handwritten notes, most likely from a child service worker or someone who worker with their case.

Tommy has been very protective towards his brothers, especially Toby. He has been seen being verbally hostile towards case workers and refuses to leave either of his brothers sides. Tommy has been very closed off with his own emotions, seeming to focus primarily on his brothers and comforting them. Tommy also denies being molested by his biological father although statistically he was most likely a victim too. His therapist has mentioned a diagnosis of separation anxiety, although Tommy does not want to be participating in the Therapy sessions. Tommy has also been seen partaking in coping methods that could be deemed "self-harm" such as picking at his skin, biting his skin/fingers, and punching walls. Therapist also noted that Tommy was showing signs of OCD and possible anger issues, but sessions stopped before a proper diagnosis could be determined.

George let out a breath and set Tommy's Packet down and picked up Toby's

Name: Toby David Ward

Preferred Name/Nickname: Toby

Birthdate: 14 February, 2003

Sex: M

Skin Tone: White

Eye Color: Blue

Hair Color: Brown

Height: 5 Foot 5 Inches

Blood Type: AB+

Medical Concerns/Allergies: N/A

Notes on Medical Concerns/Allergies: N/A

Mental Health Diagnoses: Separation Anxiety, Dyslexia, Generalized Anxiety disorder, Depression, Panic Disorder, Insomnia

Prescribed Medications: Prozac (Anxiety), Zoloft (Depression), Temazepam (Insomnia)

Is this person in Therapy: Yes

Notes on Prescribed Medications: Take Prozac Twice a day (After breakfast and after dinner), Take Zoloft once a day (before bed), if dosage is missed for one day, take at prescribed time. If dosage is missed for two days, take one pill as soon as remembered. If dosage is missed for two or more days, contact doctor.

He flipped the page to look through Toby's worksheet.

How old are you? 8

When is your birthday? 14 Feb 2003
What is your favorite food? Pizza
What is your least favorite food? Spinach
What is your favorite animal? Cats and Bees
What is your favorite color? Blue
What is the title of your favorite book? If You Give a Mouse A Cookie
What is your favorite ice cream flavor? Cookie Dough
If you could have one thing, what would it be? A Bunk bed for me and Tommy
Who is your best friend? Tommy and Wilbur
When I grow up I want to be- A land lord
What makes me happy- When I get to be play with Tommy
What makes me sad- When Tommy and Wilbur are sad
Something I really don't like- Being sad
What is your favorite subject in school? Music
Have you ever been in Foster Care before? No
How does Foster Care make you feel? Scared
What is your full name at the time of writing this? Toby David Soot

Then was the incident report, which was the same as the one attached to Tommy's.

Incident Report - Copy 2, Toby D. Soot

Reported by: Officer Phil Z.

Date of Report: Nov. 19, 2011

Incident No. 351a

Incident Type: Child Molestation, Child Abuse

Location: 1439 Denver Rd, London, England

Incident Description: Father had been accused of child molestation and child abuse of two of his three sons (Wilbur and Toby). Third son (Thomas) denied being touched, but did not deny that the molestation of the two other boys. All three children had bruises, all claimed they received said bruises while acting in self defense as well as during acts of physical abuse. Rooms were unkept and dirty, kitchen and bathroom had mold spores. The children did not have proper clothing and were not currently attending school or registered for the current school year.

Name/Role parties involved-

- 1. Wilbur O. Soot/Brother***
- 2. Thomas D. Soot/Brother***
- 3. Toby D. Soot/Brother***
- 4. Vincent M. Soot/Father***

Name/Role witnesses-

- 1. Mariah N. Davis/Neighbor***
- 2. Steven T. Davis/Neighbor***
- 3. Hannah R. Jones/Previous School Teacher***

George then picked up the last packet, Wilbur's.

Name: Wilbur Oliver Ward

Preferred Name/Nickname: Wilbur/Will

Birthdate: 1 December, 2000

Sex: M

Skin Tone: White

Eye Color: Brown

Hair Color: Brown

Height: 6 Foot 5 Inches

Blood Type: AB-

Medical Concerns/Allergies: Asthma

Notes on Medical Concerns/Allergies: Inhaler used as prescribed or as needed, not to be used more than three times a day

Mental Health Diagnoses: Generalized Anxiety Disorder, OCD, Depression, PTSD

Prescribed Medications: Albuterol Inhaler (asthma), Prozac (anxiety), Zoloft (depression), Melatonin (Sleep/PTSD)

Is this person in Therapy: Yes

Notes on Prescribed Medications: Take inhaler once every morning, take Prozac twice a day (after breakfast and after dinner), take Zoloft twice a day, (After breakfast and after dinner), Take Melatonin before bed to aid with sleep

Toby had a few notes jotted down on the back of the incident report;

Toby was directly affected by molestation, although he says it's only started recently since Wilbur started fighting back. Toby is very uncomfortable around people that aren't his brothers for the time being, he was started therapy and that seems to be going well and the medications are starting to help also.

Next was Wilbur's worksheet,

How old are you? 11

When is your birthday? 1 December 2000

What is your favorite food? Tomato Soup

What is your least favorite food? Shredded Wheat Cereal

What is your favorite animal? Cats

What is your favorite color? Yellow

What is the title of your favorite book? The Outsiders

What is your favorite ice cream flavor? Vanilla or Rocky Road

If you could have one thing, what would it be? A happy family

Who is your best friend? my brothers

When I grow up I want to be- happy

What makes me happy- Getting time to read

What makes me sad- When everything gets too overwhelming

Something I really don't like- loud noises and yelling

What is your favorite subject in school? Music

Have you ever been in Foster Care before? No

How does Foster Care make you feel? Hopeful for a better future

What is your full name at the time of writing this? Wilbur Oliver Soot

The last page was the incident report

Incident Report - Copy 1, Wilbur O. Soot

Reported by: Officer Phil Z.

Date of Report: Nov. 19, 2011

Incident No. 351a

Incident Type: Child Molestation, Child Abuse

Location: 1439 Denver Rd, London, England

Incident Description: Father had been accused of child molestation and child abuse of two of his three sons (Wilbur and Toby). Third son (Thomas) denied being touched, but did not deny that the molestation of the two other boys. All three children had bruises, all claimed they received said bruises while acting in self defense as well as during acts of physical abuse. Rooms were unkept and dirty, kitchen and bathroom had mold spores. The children did not have proper clothing and were not currently attending school or registered for the current school year.

Name/Role parties involved-

- 1. Wilbur O. Soot/Brother***
- 2. Thomas D. Soot/Brother***
- 3. Toby D. Soot/Brother***
- 4. Vincent M. Soot/Father***

Name/Role witnesses-

- 1. Mariah N. Davis/Neighbor***
- 2. Steven T. Davis/Neighbor***
- 3. Hannah R. Jones/Previous School Teacher***

Now Wilbur's notes-

Wilbur had the greatest impact caused by molestation and abuse as he has been affected for longer than the other boys. Wilbur has started therapy and it should hopefully help once he opens up more and lets the medicine do what it should do. Therapist mention to keep an eye out for self-harm (i.e. cutting), OCD-like behaviors (Scrubbing his skin raw because he said feels "dirty"), important to note that Wilbur does not eat when he gets stressed, and look for suicidal tendencies. Wilbur has not said that he is thinking of suicide, but the therapist thinks it would still be important to look out for.

George nodded to himself and slipped the papers back into their envelopes. These papers were from almost 7 years ago, so things were most likely better and easier for the boys so hopefully. George also knew from his meeting with the boys yesterday that Tommy had not changed much. He knew that Tommy was still very closed off in his emotions and liked to put others before himself and the first sheet in the packet had been updated fairly recently so Tommy probably wouldn't have been diagnosed with anything new in the past week or so.

He checked the box stating that he read through the files and understood what they meant and would be willing to help with remembering when to take medications, how to take medications, support when needed, and provide the proper care depending on the situation. He then signed on the line provided and smiled. They were officially ready to become fathers.

Almost perfectly on cue, Clay walked out and sat a bowl of soup in front of George,

"Careful, it's hot." He said, sitting down across from George,

"I just finished the paperwork, all we have to do is turn it in and we can be fathers." George almost felt giddy, he quickly ate his soup so he could go around the house and make sure that everything was as perfect as it could be for the boys, *his boys*, to show up.

He walked into the kitchen, all the dishes had been done and put away, they even reorganized all of the cabinets so the top shelf of the far left cupboard was the one with all of the peanut products in their house. He made a spot in the bathroom for the boys' medications. They set up a shoe rack in the entryway so that there would be a place for at least five sets of shoes. Each boy even got a

room that was only theirs. They gave Wilbur the biggest of the three spare bed rooms. He was the oldest and probably had the most things, Wilbur also got a nice view of their backyard and the trees back there. Tommy and Toby's rooms were relatively the same size, but Toby got a larger closet. They hoped Tommy wouldn't mind since Tommy had a bay window he could either put things on or use as a sitting spot. George just really hoped the boys would be happy here.

"Alright, I've gone around and double checked that everything's ready." George said, Clay smiled at him,

"Should we bring both cars? Just in case we need the space?" Clay asked, George thought for a moment before agree and grabbing Clay's hand to pull him up, "Let's go get our boys," George said happily.

Once they arrived at the group home, it really set in that they were fostering three teenagers. It wasn't bad, it was just... different. They both knew their house would never be as quiet as it had been and they knew Patches and Cat would have some adjusting to do. The lady who worked at the front desk, Miss Jenna, gave them three Ziploc bags of medication, all labelled with their names. Another sheet with a more detailed description of how each medication should be taken, and with that they were technically ready.

The boys came out, each with two suitcases, so It was a good thing they brought both cars since each little sedan could only hold three of the suitcases. Toby put both of his suitcases in George's car, Tommy put both of his suitcases in Clay's, and Wilbur put one in each.

As they were getting ready to leave, Wilbur realized that clay would most likely be riding back by himself since the twins were already buckled into the back of George's car, "I'll ride back with you," Wilbur said to Clay,

"Oh you don't have to, I can ride on my own if you want to stay with your brothers." Clay said,

"No, they'll be fine. I don't want to make you ride alone." Wilbur insisted as he got into the passengers seat.

With that, both cars started up and they started the journey to their new home.

"So where do you guys live exactly?" Wilbur asked,

"Further into the city, but the house is big enough that you all get a room to yourselves. We've kind of already planned out where everyone is going to be but if you guys wanna switch rooms at all, by all means, go ahead."

"I'll keep that in mind, what are the rooms like?"

"We gave you the biggest of the three spares. Ya know, you're older, you probably deserve it more, anyways. You have a bathroom connected to your room but it's also connected to what we planned to be Toby's room. The only difference between Tommy and Toby's rooms are Toby has a slightly bigger closet and Tommy has a bay window area. But, if we're talking color, yours is more of a light slate grey, Toby's is eggshell, and Tommy's is more of a cream color."

"What about schools in the area, are they any good?"

"Well, there's a school fairly close by. It's not walking distance so you'll probably have to take the bus home, but it's fairly good, about as good as any public school can get. It's a very big school too so there's lots of different things you can get involved in club and sport wise. But we were planning

on letting you guys setting in for a week or two before getting you set up in school, we didn't to stress you guys out too much."

Wilbur liked that, they were very thoughtful.

"Do you have any pets."

"yes, we have two cats, I hope that won't be a problem with any of you guys," Clay faltered as he realized they failed to mention the cats, but Wilbur seemed to perk up at the thought of having pets,

"I've never had any pets before. Well, we had a stray dog that liked to visit the park next to our group home a lot, but I've always wanted a cat. What are there names?"

Clay smiled at Wilbur's now much brighter mood, "There's a boy and a girl. The girl's name is Patches and she's getting kinda old. I would call her an elder yet but she's getting some age on her. She's a calico American-Shorthaired, but don't let the name fool you because I have never seen a cat shed as much as she does. I'm pretty sure George and I alone are keeping the lint roller industry alive." Wilbur laughed at the comment, "Then there's Cat. Yes, his name is literally Cat. George came up with that one so take out any of your grievances on him. He's almost entirely grey except for some stripes, but he's at that weird age where he's too big to be a kitten but he sure as hell still has the energy of one. He loves to play so hopefully you guys will find fun in that too, because it gets old pretty quick."

They kept up their small talk before they pulled into the driveway of a decently sized house.

Never in his life has Toby had his own room, he was always with Tommy. Only once did he have to room with both of his brothers, he and Tommy got a bunk bed (of course Tommy had to have the top bunk) and Wilbur had a bed on the other side of the room, but now, he was all alone. It felt weird and foreign. He'd probably ask to move his bed in with Tommy's, the room should be big enough for that, but would Tommy even want to? Maybe Tommy was happy or excited about his new freedom, Toby couldn't take that away from him just because he didn't like change. That would be selfish.

Tommy unpacked his few items, and set them on a desk. He plugged in his alarm clock and watched as the numbers flashed with the wrong time, he unplugged it and decided that he'd fix it later.

Wilbur spread out his blue and black plaid sheets and comforter over his new bed, smoothing out any wrinkles in the process. He was just about to sit down and take everything in when he felt something brush up against his leg. He jumped at the sudden touch, then looked down to see a calico cat brushing up against his ankle, purring softly. This must be Patches. Wilbur bent down and scratched behind her ear and rubbed her head.

If that wasn't a good omen that this was where they were meant to be, then he didn't know what was.

Tommy Goes to Therapy

Chapter Summary

Tommy gets convinced to have in first therapy appointment. He also may or may not get his first real diagnosis.

Also therapist Fundy makes an appearance!

TWs

Mentions of self-harm

OCD

Panicking but no panic attacks

Chapter Notes

Sorry I took so long to update! I just didn't have motivation for this story for a while but I've got some random spurts of creativity and inspiration so I thought I'd get out two chapters in one day!

Sorry if there's any mistakes I wrote this kind of fast... :/

“Since we’re all here together, let’s talk about some household rules.” Clay said, Tommy groaned in response, they’d be here for, what? 4 hours? And they’re already getting rules? “It’s probably not what you think, you’ll probably think *well isn’t that obvious?* But we just want to make sure everyone is on the same page” Clay said as if he was ready Tommy’s mind.

“Okay, I’ll start,

1. Treat people and property with respect.
2. Knock on closed doors when entering, we want to try and give you as much privacy as you need.
3. Please pick up after yourselves. We may be your new legal guardians but we are not your maids. We don’t think you guys will have a problem with that, and we totally understand if you just forget a time or two.
4. Attend the family meetings. We’re going to try to have family meetings once or twice a month, just to check in with everyone. Obviously, if something comes up or you really don’t feel comfortable with participating in a family meeting, please let either me or Clay know so we can work it out and figure out what’s going on.
5. Lastly, please be open with how you’re feeling.” George listed.

They seemed easy enough to follow in Toby’s opinion, he could do them all and he knew Wilbur could do them all but the last one was iffy with Tommy,

“Tommy’s really bad with talking about his emotions unless he gets caught feeling them.” Toby said bluntly.

"They're called *my* emotions for a reason." Tommy countered. This got George thinking, Tommy *was* the only one out of the three boys who doesn't regularly go to therapy, maybe it wouldn't hurt if he attended a session or two,

"No absolutely not." Tommy said, George figured he must've been thinking out loud.

"I've been to therapy, Clay's been to therapy. It wouldn't hurt to go, even if it's just once." George said, Tommy only sifted in response.

"This'll be good for you, Tommy. Please just give it like 3 or 4 sessions and if you still hate it then, we can take you out and you can tell us '*i told you so*' does that sound alright?"

"Really, Tommy. Therapy isn't that bad. I'm in it and Toby is in it. There's nothing wrong with being in therapy or needing a little help sometimes." Wilbur added,

"Well that's because you guys need it, I don't need help. I've been fine on my own before so why is now different?" Tommy asked, firmly.

"You didn't seem too fine on your own in the hallwa--"

"I understand you're trying to help, Wilbur, but that was a little rude." George interrupted.

"I'm just trying to say; if it's happened once, it can happen again. You need to learn how to take care of yourself better and be more willing to ask for help." Wilbur said, tone much softer than it had been.

"I can even get you set up with Tommy and Wilbur's therapist, so you know they're good." George added.

"Fine." Tommy caved, "I'll give it 4 visits, and then I'm done."

George decided to make the call as soon as everyone has dispersed from the kitchen. The absolute earliest the therapist could get him in was amazingly in 3 hours. George agreed and told Clay about what was going on,

"I can take him if you want to stay here with Wilbur and Toby," Clay offered, George nodded in agreement and went off to tell Tommy of his new plans.

Tommy shifted uncomfortably as his therapist shuffled through some paperwork.

Finally, he looked up at him and smiled warmly, "Hi Thomas, I'm Floris, how are you today?" The man asked, he had a very thin face with patches of white throughout his hair, but his eyes were kind and welcoming.

"Uh, call me Tommy, please."

"My apologies, Tommy. How's your day been?"

"S'been alright." Tommy said, nodding to himself. He couldn't bring himself to look Floris in the eyes.

"Well, alright is better than a lot of things. Can we start off with a few questions?"

"I guess." Tommy mumbled,

"I just want to start off with letting you know that everything you say stays between us unless I think you're going to hurt yourself or someone else. Is this your first time in Therapy?"

"No."

"Okay, how are you feeling about coming back?"

"A little nervous,"

"I'm sorry to hear that, hopefully it won't be as bad as it may seem and maybe you'll learn a bit about yourself."

Tommy sighed rather loudly, "But there's nothing wrong with me so I shouldn't be here in the first place." He said, his voice teetering on becoming a yell. Floris waited a second and let Tommy take a few deep breaths on his own. He noticed Tommy's thumb was picking at the skin next to the nail on his middle finger, a tiny amount of blood was seeping into the crease between his skin and nail as his thumb smeared it slightly.

Floris scribbled something down onto his notepad quickly and opened a desk drawer, "What's your favorite color, Tommy?"

The question caught Tommy for guard for a moment, "Um... Red?"

Floris smiled and nodded, "It's not exactly red, but it's the closest color I have," He handed Tommy a plastic cube with different bits on each side, "This is called a fidget cube, you've probably seen one or at least heard of them before. I saw you fidgeting with your fingers, but I think using this would be better than picking at your skin." Floris spoke.

Tommy did have to agree with him, it would probably be better than knowingly making yourself bleed. The color of the cube wasn't exactly red, it was more of a maroon-ish color leaning towards purple, but Tommy didn't hate it. The color was pleasing to the eyes. He hesitantly took the cube, flipping it around in his hands a few times, before his thumb found a divot, the entire side of the cube was just a divot and nothing else. He ran his nail across it, scratching and picking as if it were his skin, it did the job. He leaned back in his seat and waited for Floris to start talking again.

"You know, it's not a bad thing to need to go to therapy. You don't even need to have anything wrong to come here. Sometimes people just want a second opinion on things or maybe a new way to challenge themselves to look at life. Therapy is for everyone." Floris said, with a calm voice.

Tommy had never thought of it that way. He nodded slightly, deciding to not agree or disagree because agreeing would mean he was wrong and Thomas Ward was never wrong, but disagreeing would make him seem rude and he didn't want to come off that way, especially on their first time meeting.

"Who all is in your family?" Floris asked,

"There's me, Wilbur, and Toby. We're all brothers, but now there's Clay and George too. They're our new foster fathers."

"How's that going? Are you liking the new home?"

"Eh, it's different. I guess I like it. It hasn't even been a full day yet but they're already trying to have us in mind for everything, like, George really wanted me to be here today. I'm the only one out of my brothers who doesn't go to therapy regularly and he thinks it could really help me, but I don't know what there is to help."

Floris nodded, writing something down, and then looked back up, "I'm not saying there is a problem, but let's imagine you're Wilbur, if I were to ask Wilbur if there is any chance Tommy would have what he deems a "problem" what would it be?"

"Well Wilbur has been diagnosed with-"

"I didn't ask what Wilbur was diagnosed with, I asked what *Wilbur thinks* Tommy would have." Floris reminded Tommy,

"Ok, um, he would say separation anxiety. I am diagnosed with that."

"If we could call Wilbur right now, is that all he would say?"

"He might say OCD, but I don't know."

"Is there a specific reason for that one?"

"Well, Wilbur has OCD and he keeps telling me that he thinks I have it and he wants me to get tested or whatever, I don't think I do though. I don't like labels, even if I do have it, I hate the idea of having it be set in stone that I have one thing and that one thing is all it will ever be and it cannot change or go away because it will always be that label and when people look at my file they won't see Tommy, they'll see my diagnosis." Tommy ranted.

Floris cocked an eyebrow and leaned back in his seat, scribbling something down again on his notepad, "Do you think that's why you don't want to come to therapy? Maybe deep down, you know something is wrong, but confronting it like you do in therapy will whittle you down to nothing other than the diagnosis."

"Yeah, I think that'd explain it pretty well." Tommy said as his leg started bouncing. The fidget cube in his hand remained in his hand as his thumb travelled back to his middle finger, and started picking at the skin. *Technically*, it was a sign of compulsion. But that one compulsion couldn't lead to an entire diagnosis of OCD, he'd need more information

"We're going to play a game called lightning questions, you're gonna answer as fast as you can, okay?" Floris asked, Tommy nodded.

"Do you wash your hands a lot?"

"I guess so, probably 8 times a day-ish. Before and after meals, and when I wake up and before I go to bed."

"What'll happen if you don't wash your hands?"

"They'll be dirty, I'll get it on me or Toby or Wilbur or in my food."

"Are Wilbur and Toby younger or older than you?" Floris already knew the answer, he knew Wilbur and Toby but he just wanted to try and lighten up and tension that had been created.

"Wilbur's older by like, three years, and Toby's my twin, but I'm older by six minutes so I've had more time to wisen-up." Tommy joked lightly, Floris smiled and hoped this was Tommy becoming more comfortable with him.

"Here's a situation; You're about to go to school, you're already running late. Wilbur is driving and you're waiting with him in the car, Toby locks the door and gets into the car. What happens next?"

“Well, he wouldn’t lock it to begin with, that’s always been my job and both he and Wilbur know that, but I’ll play your game and pretend he does. I would get out and check to make sure he’s locked it right.”

Floris’ pen stopped writing, he furrowed his eyebrows and looked up at Tommy, “What’s the right way to lock it?”

“You... um... you have to check it three times. Lock it three times, just in case they didn’t lock the other times and push like you’re trying to open it three times to make sure that it latched right.”

“I’ve never thought of it that way, how about you show me what you mean on the door to my office, really quick?” Floris suggested, handing Tommy a key on a lanyard. Tommy shrugged and took the key.

They walked into the hallway, closing the door behind them. Tommy put the key into the slot and turned it back and forth three times before taking it out, he then tested the door three times before stepping back and handing Floris the key,

“Now it’s locked.” He stated, matter-of-factly

Floris unlocked the door, opening it slightly to prove that he unlocked it then closed it and put the key into the slot, turned the key one time, and didn’t even check once to see if the door was locked, “Now it’s locked.” He said in the same way Tommy did.

Tommy shifted his weight uncomfortably, “Well, you don’t know if it’s actually locked.”

“But I do. I just locked it.” Floris said, nonchalantly. Tommy starred at him, dumb-founded and mouth slightly agape.

“Do you want to check it?” Floris asked, Tommy nodded and started to reach for the key in Floris’ hand.

“You don’t need the key to check if it’s locked.”

“I really do.” The urgency in Tommy’s voice was an indicator for Floris that the boy would probably start panicking soon, he handed the boy the key, let him do his thing, and then let them both back into the office.

“I think this went really well for our first session together. Let’s cap it today at 30 minutes and give you a break, yeah?” Floris asked,

“Yeah, that’s fine.” Tommy said, reaching into his pocket to hand back the fidget cube, “Here you go, I almost forgot it.”

“No, you can keep that if you’d like.” Tommy smiled and thanked the man as the two walked out to the waiting area. Clay was sitting in one of the small chairs and scrolling through his phone, “Hey dad, can I speak to you for a moment?” Floris asked, Clay’s head perked up and he nodded,

“I’ll be right back kiddo, just wait here.” Clay said to Tommy, whose face had dropped at the mention of them talking without him there.

Clay sat down in the seat across from Floris’ desk,

“Did everything go well?” Clay asked,

“Oh most definitely, that’s not what I’m worried about right now.” He pulled out his notebook and slipped a pair of black framed glasses onto his nose, “I just wanted to let you know, Tommy’s been picking at the skin on his fingers. Since he’s aware that he’s bleeding when he’s doing it, it classifies as self-harm. I also think I’m going to diagnose Tommy with OCD just from some things I’ve seen today. We did a little exercise and it was pretty clear. There’s obviously anxiety but I believe the anxiety along with any other mood outbursts are just stemming from the OCD to begin with, so I wanted to get him started on a pretty low dosage of Buspirone. It can help treat compulsions and lessen anxiety as well as aid in sleep.”

Clay nodded, taking it all in, maybe they’d finally be able to get Tommy the help he needs.

“Is there a pharmacy you’d like me to send the prescription to?”

“Um yeah, this one.” Clay scribbled the address down on a piece of paper and handed it to Floris,

“Alright, take care. I’ll see him this time next week?”

“Unless anything changes, yes.”

“Okay, contact me if you need anything.” Floris ended with, he waved Clay out and he made his way to the sitting area where Tommy was messing with a magenta piece of plastic,

“Okay, Toms, we’re heading home now, we are going to stop at the pharmacy on our way though.”

Tommy sank in on himself slightly, making a noise of acknowledgement before getting up and making his way to the car.

This would hopefully be the start of Tommy’s new beginning.

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